A Healing Question propounded

and resolved upon occasion of the late publique and seasonable Call to Humiliation, in order to love and union amongst the honest party, and with a desire to apply Balsome to the wound, before it become incurable.

THE Question propounded is, What possibility doth yet remain (all things considered) of reconciling and uniting the dissenting judgements of honest men within the three Nations, who still pretend to agree in the spirit, Justice, and reason of the late good cause; and what are the means to effect this?

Answ. If it be taken for granted (as on the Magistrates part, from the ground inviting the people of *England* and *Wales* to a solemn day of Fasting and Humiliation, may not be dispaired of) that all the dissenting parties agree still in the spirit and reason of the same righteous cause, the resolution seems very cleer in the affirmative; arguing not onely for a possibility, but a great probability hereof, nay a necessity daily approaching neerer and neerer to compell it, if any or all of the dissenting parties intend or desire to be safe from the danger of the common enemy, who is not out of work, though at present much out of sight and observation.

The grounds of this are briefly these. First the cause hath still the same goodness in it as ever; and is or ought to be as much in the hearts of al good people that have adhered to it. It is not lesse to be valued now, then when neither blood nor treasure were thought too dear

to carry it on, and hold it up from sinking; and hath the same Omnipotent God, whose great Name is concerned in it, as well as his peoples outward safety and wellfare; Who knows also how to give a revival to it, when secondary instruments and visible means fail, or prove deceitful.

Secondly, The Persons concerned and engaged in this Cause, are still the same as before; with the advantage of being more tried, more enured to danger and hardship, and more endeared to one another, by their various and great experiences, as well of their own hearts as their fellow-Brethrens. These are the same still in heart and desire after the same thing, which is, that being freed out of the hands of their enemies, they may serve the Lord without feare, in holinesse and righteousnesse all the daies of their life.

As they have had this great good finally in their aims (if Declarations to men, and Appeals to God signifie any thing) so as a requisite to attain this, they did with great cheerfulnes & unanimity, draw out themselves to the utmost, in the maintenance of a war, when all other meanes, first essayed proved ineffectual. In the management of this war, it pleased God (the righteous Judge, who was appealed to in the controversie) so to bless the Council, and Forces of the persons concerned and engaged in this cause, as in the end to make them absolute and compleat Conquerors over their common Enemy. And by this meanes they had added unto the naturall right which was in them before (and so declared by their Representatives in Parliament assembled) the right of Conquest for the strengthening of their just claim to be governed by National Councils, and successive Representatives of their own election and setting up. This they once thought they had been in possession of, when it was ratified, as it were, in the blood of the last King: But of late a great interruption having happened unto them in their former expectations, and instead thereof,

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ſomething riſing up that ſeems rather accommodated to the private and ſelfiſh intereſt of a particular part (in compariſon) then truly adequate to the common good and concern of the whole Body engaged in this Cauſe: Hence it is that this compacted body is now falling aſſunder into many diſſenting parts (a thing unforeſeen, nor unhoped for by the common Enemy all along as their laſt relief:) and if theſe breaches be not timely healed, and the offences (before they take too deep root) removed, they will certainly work more to the advantage of our common Enemy, then any of their own unwearied endeavours, & dangerous contrivances in forreign parts put altogether.

A ſerious diſcuſſion, and ſober enlarging upon theſe grounds, will quickly give an inſight into the ſtate of the Queſtion, and naturally tend to a plain and familiar reſolution thereof.

That which is firſt to be opened, is the nature and goodnes of the Cauſe; which had it not carried in it its own evidence, would ſcarce have found ſo many of the people of *God* adherers to it, within the Three Nations, contributing either their counſels, their purſes, their bodily pains, or their affections and prayers, as a combined ſtrength; without which, the military force alone would have been little available to ſubdue the common Enemy, and reſtore to this whole body their juſt naturall Rights in civil things, and true freedome in matters of conſcience.

The two laſt mentioned particulars, rightly ſtated, will evidence ſufficiently the nature and goodneſſe of this Cauſe.

For the firſt of theſe, that is to ſay, the Natural right, which the whole party of Honeſt men adhering to this Cauſe, are by ſucceſſe of their Arms reſtored unto, fortified in, and may claime as their undeniable priviledge, that righteouſly cannot be taken from them, nor

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they debarred from bringing into exercise, It lies in this.

They are to have and enjoy the freedome (by way of dutifull compliance and condiscention from all the parts and members of this society) to set up meet persons in the place of Supreme Judicature and Authority amongst them; whereby they may have the use and benefit of the choicest light and wisedome of the Nation that they are capable to call forth, for the Rule and Government under which they will live; and through the orderly exercise of such measure of wisedome and counsel as the Lord in this way shall please to give unto them, to shape and forme all subordinate actings and administrations of Rule and Government, so as shall best answer the publique welfare and safety of the whole.

This, in substance, is the right and freedome contained in the nature and goodnesse of the cause, wherein the Honest party have been engaged. For in this, all the particulars of our civill right and freedome are comprehended, conserved in and derived from their proper root; In which whilst they grow, they will ever thrive, flourish and increase: whereas on the contrary, if there be never so many fair branches of liberty planted on the root of a private and selfish interest, they will not long prosper, but must, within a little time, wither and degenerate into the nature of that whereinto they are planted. And hence indeed sprung the evil of that Government which rose in and with the *Norman* Conquest.

The root and bottome upon which it stood, was not publique interest, but the private lust and will of the Conqueror, who by force of armes did at first devein the right and freedome which was, and is, due to the whole body of the people: For whose safety and good, government it self is ordained by God, not for the particular

ticular benefit of the Rulers, as a distinct and private interest of their own; which yet, for the most part, is not onely preferred before the common good, but upheld in opposition thereunto. And as at first the Conqueror did, by violence and force, deny this freedome to the people, which was their natural right and priviledge; so he, and his Successors all along, lay as bars and impediments to the true National interest and publique good, in the very National Councils and Assemblies themselves; which were constituted in such a manner, as most served for the upholding of the private interest of their Families. And this being challenged by them as their Prerogative, was found by the people assembled in Parliament, most unrighteous, burdensome, and destructive to their liberty. And when they once perceived, that by this Engine all their just rights were like to be destroyed, especially (being backed, as it was, with the power of the Militia, which the late King, for that purpose, had assumed into his hands, and would not, upon the peoples application to him in Parliament part with into the hands of that great Councill, who were best to be entrusted with the Nations safety) this was the ground of the quarrell, upon a civil account, between the King and his party, and the whole body of adherents to the cause of the peoples true liberty; whereof this short touch hath been given, and shall suffice for the opening of the first Branch of this Cause.

The second branch which remaines briefly to be handled, is that which also upon the grounds of natural right is to be laid claim unto; but distinguishes it self from the former, as it respects a more heavenly and excellent object, wherein the freedome is to be exercised and enjoyed, that is to say, matters of Religion, or that concern the service and worship of God.

Unto this freedome the Nations of the World have right and title, by the purchase of Christs blood; who

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by vertue of his death and resurrection is become the sole Lord and Ruler in and over the conscience; for to this end Christ died, rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living; and that every one might give an account of himself in all matters of Gods worship, unto God and Christ alone, as their own Master, unto whom they stand or fall in judgement, and are not in these things to be oppressed, or brought before the Judgment-seats of men. For why shouldest thou set at nought thy Brother in matters of his Faith and conscience, and herein intrude into the proper office of Christ, since we are all to stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ, whether Governours or governed, and by his decision onely are capable of being declared with certainty, to be in the right or in the wrong?

By vertue then of this Supream Law, sealed and confirmed in the blood of Christ unto all men (whose souls he challenges a propriety in, to bring under his inward rule in the service and worship of God) it is that all Magistrates are to fear and forbear intermedling with giving rule or imposing in those matters. They are to content themselves with what is plain in their commission, as ordained of God to be his Minister unto men for good, whilest they approve themselves the doers of that which is good in the sight of men, and whereof earthy and worldly Judicatures are capable to make a cleare and perfect judgement: In which case the Magistrate is to be for praise and protection to them. In like manner he is to be a Minister of terrour and revenge to those that doe evill in matters of outward practice, converse, and dealings in the things of this life between man and man, for the cause whereof the judicatures of men are appointed and set up. But to exceed these limits, as it is not safe nor warrantable for the Magistrate (in that he who is higher then the highest, regards, and will shew himself displeased at it) so neither

ther is it good for the people, who hereby are nourished up in a biting, devouring, wrathfull spirit one against another, and are found transgressors of that Royal law which forbids us to doe that unto another, which we would not have them do unto us, were we in their condition.

This freedome then is of high concern to be had and enjoy, as well for the Magistrates sake, as for the peoples common good; and it consists, as hath been said, in the Magistrates forbearing to put forth the power of rule and coercion in things that God hath exempted out of his Commission. So that all care requisite for the peoples obtaining this, may be exercised with great ease, if it be taken in its proper season, and that this restraint be laid upon the Supreme Power before it be erected, as a fundamental Constitution among others, upon which the free consent of the people is given, to have the persons brought into the exercise of Suprem Authority over them, and on their behalf, and if besides, as a further confirmation hereunto, it be acknowledged be the voluntary act of the ruling Power, when once brought into a capacity of acting legislatively, that herein they are bound up, and judge it their duty so to be (both in reference to God the Institutor of Magistracy, and in reference to the whole Body by whom they are entrusted) this great blessing will hereby be so well provided for, that we shall have no cause to feare, as it may be ordered.

By this meanes a great part of the outward exercise of Antichristian Tyranny and bondage will be plucked up by the very roots: which till some such course be held in it, will be alwayes apt to renew and sprout out afresh, under some new forme or refined appearances, as by late yeares experience we have been taught. For since the fall of the Bishops and persecuting Presbyteries, the same spirit is apt to arise in the next sort of Cler-

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gy, that can get the ear of the Magistrate, and pretend to the keeping and ruling the conscience of the Governors. Although this spirit and practice hath been all along decried by the faithful adherents to this Cause, as a most sore oppression, and insufferable yoke of bondage, most unrighteously kept up over the consciences of the people, and therefore judged by them most needfull to be taken out of the way. And in this matter the present Governors have been willing very eminently to give their Testimony, in their publique Declarations, however in practice there is much of grievance yet found among us, though more, in probability, from the officiousnesse of subordinate Ministers, then any clear purpose or designe of the chief in power.

Having thus shewed what the true freedom is, in both the Branches of it, that shines forth in the righteous Cause, wherein the good people of these Nations have so deeply engaged: It will not be improper in the next place to consider two particulars more that give still further light into the matter in question; as first The qualifications of the Persons that have adhered to this Cause. Secondly, the capacity wherein they have been found from time to time carrying it on.

As to their Qualification, they have in the general, distinguished themselves and been made known, by a forwardnes to assist and own the publique welfare and good of the Nation, for the attaining and preserving the just rights and liberties thereof, asserted and witnessed unto in the true stating of this Cause, according to the two branches there of already spoken to. They have shewed themselves, upon all occasions, desirers and lovers of true freedom, either in civils, or in spirituals, or in both. To express their value thereof, and faithfulnes to the same, they have largely contributed, in one kind or other what was proper to each in his place to do; wch actions of theirs proceeding from hearts sincerely affected

affected to the cauſe, created in them a right to be of an Incorporation and Society by themſelves, under the name of the good Party; having been from the beginning unto this day publiquely and commonly ſo acknowledged, by way of diſtinction from all Neuters, cloſe and open Enemies, and deceitfull Friends or Apoſtates. Theſe, in order to the maintaining of this Cauſe, have ſtood by the Army, in defence and ſupport thereof, againſt all oppoſition whatever, as thoſe that, by the growing light of theſe times, have been taught and led forth in their experiences, to look above and beyond the letter, forme, and outward circumſtances of government, into the inward reaſon and ſpirit thereof, herein only to fix and terminate, to the leaving behind all empty ſhadows, that would obtrude themſelves in the place of true freedome.

Secondly, as to the capacity wherein theſe perſons, thus qualified, have acted, it hath been very variable, and ſubject to great changes: ſometimes in one form, and ſometimes in another, and very ſeldome, if ever at all, ſo exactly, and in all points conſonant to the rule of former Lawes and Conſtitutions of Government, as to be clearly and fully juſtified by them, any longer then the Law of Succeſſe and Conqueſt did uphold them who had the inward warrant of Juſtice and Righteouſneſſe to encourage them in ſuch their actings.

The utmoſt and laſt reſerve therefore which they have had, in caſe all other failed, hath been their military capacity, not only ſtrictly taken for the ſtanding Army, but in the largeſt ſenſe, wherein the whole party may (with the Army, and under that military conſtitution and conduct, which by the providence of God they ſhall then be found in) aſſociate themſelves in the beſt order they can, for the common defence and ſafety of the whole. As not ignorant, that when once em-

bodied in this their Military posture, in such manner as by common content shall be found requisite for the safety of the body, they are most irresistible, absolute, and comprehensive in their power; having that wherein the substance of all Government is contained, and under the protection whereof, and safety that may be maintained thereby, they can contrive and determine, in what manner this irresistible, absolute, and boundless power, unto which they are now arrived in this their Military capacity shall have just and due limits set unto it, and be drawn out in a meet and orderly way of exercise, for the Commonweale and safety of the whole Body, under the rule and oversight of a Supreme Judicature; unto the wisedome of whose lawes and orders, the sword is to become most entirely subject and subservient: And this without the least cause of jealousie or unsafety, either to the standing Army, or any member thereof, or unto the good people adhering to this Cause, or any one of them; since the interest of both, by this mutual action of either, will be so combined together in one, even in that wherein before they were distinct, that all just cause of difference, fear, animosity, emulation, jealousie, or the like, will be wholly abolished and removed.

For when once the whole body of the good people find that the Military interest & capacity is their own, and that into which necessity at the last may bring the whole Party (whereof of right a place is to be reserved for them) and that herein they are so far from being in subjection or slavery, that in this posture they are most properly soveraign, and possesse their right of natural soveraignty, they will presently see a necessity of continuing ever one with their Army raised and maintained by them, for the promoting this Cause against the common Enemy; who in his next attempt will put for all with greater desperatenesse and rage then ever,

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Again, when once the ſtanding Army and their Governours ſhall alſo find, that by ſetting and keeping up themſelves in a divided intereſt from the reſt of the Body of Honeſt men, they withhold from themſelves thoſe contributions in all voluntary and cheerful aſſiſtances, by the affections and prayers, by the perſons and purſes of the good party, to the weakening themſelves thereby, as to any vigerous ſupport from them, in the times of moſt imminent danger (whereof the late King had an experience, that will not ſuddenly be out of memory, when he undertook the war in the beginning of theſe troubles, againſt the Scots, and was, in a manner, therein deſerted by all the good party in *England*) they will then find (if they ſtay not till it be too late) that by eſpouſing the intereſt of the people, in ſubmitting themſelves with their fellow adherents to the Cauſe, under the rule and authority of their own Supreme Judicature, they loſe not their Power or Soveraignty; but becoming one Civil or Politique Incorporation with the whole party of honeſt men, they doe therein keep the Soveraignty, as originally ſeated in themſelves, and part with it only but as by deputation and repreſentation of themſelves, when it is brought into an orderly way of exerciſe, by being put into the hands of perſons choſen and entruſted by themſelves to that purpoſe.

By this mutual and happy tranſition which may be made between the party of Honeſt men in the Three Nations virtually in Arms, and thoſe actually ſo now in power at the Head of the Army, how ſuddenly would the union of the whole Body be conſolidated, and made ſo firm as it will not need to fear all the deſignes and attempts of the common Enemy; eſpecially if herein they unite themſelves in the firſt place to the Lord, as willing to follow his providence, and obſerve his will in the way and manner of bringing this to paſſe. In

which else we shall not need to fear what all the gates of hell are able to do in opposition thereunto.

It is not then the standing and being of the present Army and Military forces in the three Nations, that is lyable to exception or offence; from any dissenting judgements at this time amongst the honest well affected party. In and with them, under God, stand the welfare and outward safety of the whole body; and to be enemies to them or with them hurt, were to do it to themselves; and by trying such conclusions to play the game of the common enemy, to the utter ruine and destruction, not only of the true freedome aymed at and contended for in the late wars, but of the very persons themselves that have been in any sort active or eminent promoters thereof.

The Army considered as it is in the hands of an honest and wise General, and sober faithfull Officers, embodied with the rest of the party of honest men; and espousing still the same cause, and acting in their primitive simplicity, humility, and trust, in reference to the welfare and safety of the whole body, is the only justifyable and most advantagious posture and capacity that the good party at present can finde themselves in, in order to the obtaining that true freedome they have fought for; and possessing of it in the establishment thereof upon the true Basis and foundation, as hath been shewed of right Government.

That wherein the offence lies, and which causes such great thoughts of heart amongst the honest party (if it may be freely expressed, as sure it may, when the Magistrate himselfe professes he doth but desire and wait for conviction therein) is in short this.

That when the right and privilledge is returned, may is restored by Conquest unto the whole Body (that forfeited not their interest therein) of freely disposing themselves in such a constitution of righteous Government,

vernment, as may best answer the ends held forth in this Cause; that nevertheless, either through delay they should be withheld as they are, or through design they should come at last to be utterly denied the exercise of this their right, upon pretence that they are not in capacity as yet to use it; which indeed hath some truth in it, if those that are now in power, and have the command of the Arms, doe not prepare all things requisite thereunto, as they may, and like faithful Guardians to the Commonwealth, admitted to be in its nonage, they ought.

But if the bringing of true freedome into exercise amongst men, yea, so refined a party of men, be impossible; why hath this been concealed all this while? and why was it not thought on before so much blood was spilt, and treasure spent? surely, such a thing as this was judged real and practicable, not imaginary and notional.

Besides, why may it not suffice to have been thus long delayed and withheld from the whole body, at least as to its being brought by them into exercise now at last? surely the longer it is withheld; the stronger jealousies do increase; that it is intended to be assumed and ingrossed by a part only; to the leaving the rest of the body (who in all reason and justice ought to be equally participants with the other in the right and benefit of the Conquest, for as much as the war was managed at the expence and for the safety of the whole) in a condition almost as much exposed, and subject to be imposed upon; as if they had been enemies and conquered, not in any sense Conquerors.

If ever such an unrighteous, unkind and deceitful dealing with brethren (should happen; although it might continue above the reach of question from humane judicatures, yet can we think it possible it should

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escape and go unpunished by the immediate hand of the Righteous Judge of the whole World, when he ariseth out of his place to do right to the oppressed?

Nay if in stead of favouring and promoting the peoples common good and welfare, self-interest and private gain should evidently appear to be the things we have aymed at all along; if those very Tyrannical principles and Antichristian reliques, which God by us hath punished in our predecessors, should again revive, spring up afresh, and shew themselves lodged also and retained in our bosomes; rendring us of the number of those that have forgot they were purged from their old sins, and declaring us to be such as to please a covetous mind, doe withhold from destruction that which God hath designed to the curse of his vengeance: If all those great advantages of serving the Lords will and design in propouring and advancing his peoples true welfare and outward safety, which (as the fruit of his blessing upon our Armies) have so miraculously fallen into our hands, shall at last be wrested and misimproved to the enriching and greatning of our selves: If these things should even be found amongst us (which the Lord in mercy forbid) shall we need to look any further for the accursed thing? will not our Consciences shew us from the light of the Word and Spirit of God, how neer a conformity these actions would hold therewith? which sin, *Josh. 7.* became a curse to the Camp, and withheld the Lord from being any more amongst them, or going out with their forces. And did the action of *Achan* import any more then these two things. First, he saved and kept from destruction the goodly Babylonish garment, which was devoted by God thereunto. Secondly, he brought not in the fruit and gain of the Conquest into the Lords Treasury, but covetously went about to convert it to his

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own proper use. To doe this, is to take of the accursed thing, which *Josh.* 7. all Israel was said to do, in the sin of *Achan*, and to have stollen and dissembled likewise, and put it amongst their own stuffe. This caused the anger of the Lord to kindle against Israel, and made them unable to stand before their enemies, but their hearts melted as water. And thus far the Lord is concerned, if such an evil as this shall ye hid in the midst of us. But to return to what we were upon before.

The matter which is in question among the dissenting parts of the whole body of honest men, is not so trivial and of such small consequence, as some would make it. 'Tis in effect, the main and whole of the Cause; without which all the freedome which the people have or can have, is in comparison but shadow and in name only, and therefore can never give that peace and satisfaction to the body, which is requisite unto a durable and solid settlement. This is that which makes all sound & safe at the root, and gives the right ballance necessary to be held up between soveraignity and subjection, in the exercise of all righteous Government; applying the use of the sword to the promoting and upholding the publike safety and welfare of the whole body, in preference and if need be in opposition unto any of the parts; whilst yet by its equal and impartial administration in reference unto each, it doth withal maintain the whole Body in a most delightfull harmony, welfare, and correspondency. The sword never can, nor is it to be expected ever will doe this, while the soveraignity is admitted and placed any where else, then in the whole Body of the people that have adhered to the cause, and by them be derived unto their successive Representatives, as the most equal and impartial Judicature for the effecting hereof.

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Where there is then a righteous and good constitution of Government, there is first an orderly union of many understandings together, as the publique and common Supream Judicature or visible Sovereignity, set in a way of free and orderly exercise, for the directing and applying the use of the ruling power or the sword, to promote the interest and common welfare of the whole, without any disturbance or annoyance, from within or from without. And then secondly, there is a like union and readiness of will in all the Individuals, in their private capacities, to execute and obey (by all the power requisite, and that they are able to put forth) those soveraign Laws and Orders issued out by their own Deputies and Trustees.

A Supream Judicature thus made the Representative of the whole, is that which we say, will most naturally care, and most equally provide for the Common good and safety. Though by this it is not denied, but that the supream power, when by free consent 'tis placed in a single person or in some few persons, may be capable also to administer righteous Government; at least the Body that gives this liberty, when they need not, are to thank themselves if it prove otherwise. But when this free and natural accesse unto Government, is interrupted and declined, so as a liberty is taken by any particular member, or number of them, that are to be reputed but a part in comparison of the whole, to assume and engrosse the office of soveraign rule and power, and to impose themselves as the competent publique Judge of the safety and good of the whole, without their free and due consent; and to lay claim unto this, as those that find themselves possessed of the sword (and that so advantagiously, as it cannot be recovered again out of their hands, without more apparent danger and damage to the whole body, then such attempts are worth)

worth) this is that Anarchy that is the first rise and step to Tyranny; and laies the grounds of manifest confusion and disorder; exposing the ruling power to the next hand that on the next opportunity can lay hold on the sword; and so, by a kind of necessity, introduces the highest imposition and bondage upon the whole Body, in compelling all the parts, though never so much against the true publique interest, to serve and obey, as their soveraigne rule and supream Authority, the Arbitrary will and judgement of those that bring themselves into rule by the power of the sword, in the right only of a part that sets up it selfe in preference before, or at least in competition with the welfare of the whole:

And if this, which is so essential to the well being and right constitution of Government, were once obtained, the disputes about the forme would not prove so dificult, nor find such opposition, as to keep up the bone of contention and disunion, with much danger to the whole. For if as the foundation of all, the soveraignty be ackowledged to reside originally in the whole body of adherents to this Cause (whose natural and inherent right thereunto is of a far ancienter date then what is obtained by success of their arms, and so cannot be abrogated even by Conquest it selfe if that were the case) and then if in consequence hereof, a supream Judicature be set up and orderly constituted, as naturally arising and resulting from the free choice and consent of the whole Body, taken out from among themselves, as flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, of the same publique spirit and nature with themselves, and the main be by this means secured; what could be propounded afterwards, as to the form of administration that would much stick?

Would a ſtanding Council of State ſettled for life, in reference to the ſafety of the Commonwealth, and for the maintaining intercourſe and commerce with Forreign States, under the Inſpection and overſight of the Supreme Judicature, but of the ſame fundamental conſtitution with themſelves, would this be diſliked? admitting their orders were binding, in the intervals of Supreme National Aſſemblies, ſo far only as conſonant to the ſettled Lawes of the Common-wealth the vacancy of any of which by death or otherwiſe might be ſupplied by the vote of the major part of themſelves. Nay would there be any juſt exception to be taken, if (beſides both theſe) it ſhould be agreed (as another part of the fundamental conſtitution of the Government) to place that branch of Soveraignty which chiefly reſpects the execution of the Lawes, in a diſtinct office from that of the legiſlative power (and yet ſubordinate to them and to the Lawes) capable to be entruſted in the hands of one ſingle perſon, if need require, or in a greater number, as the legiſlative power ſhould think fit; and for the greater ſtrength and honour unto this Office, that the execution of all Lawes and Orders (that are binding) may go forth in his, or their name; and all diſobedience thereunto, or contempt thereof, be taken as done to the peoples Soveraignty whereof he or they bear the Image or Repreſentation, ſubordinate to the Legiſlative Power, and at their will to be kept up and continued in the hands of a ſingle Perſon or more, as the experience of the future good or evil of it ſhall require.

Would ſuch an office as this, thus ſtated, carry in it any Inconſiſtency with a free State? nay, if it be well conſidered, would it not rather be found of excellent uſe to the well-being of Magiſtracy founded upon this righteous bottome, that ſuch a Lieftenancy of the peoples ſoveraignty in theſe three Nations, may al-

alwayes reſide in ſome one or more perſons, in whoſe adminiſtration, that which is reward and puniſhment may ſhine forth?

And if now it ſhall be objected, that (notwithſtanding all theſe Cautions) ſhould once the Soveraignty be acknowledged to be in the diffuſed body of the people (though the adherents to this Cauſe, not only as their natural, but as their acquired right by Conqueſt) they would ſuddenly put the uſe and exerciſe of the Legiſlative power into ſuch hands, as would, through their ill-qualifiedneſſe to the work ſpoil all, by male-adminiſtration thereof, and hereby loſe the cauſe in ſtead of upholding and maintaining it.

The Anſwer unto this is, Firſt that God by his providence hath eaſed our minds much of this ſolicitude, by the courſe he hath already taken to fit and prepare a choice and ſelected number of the people unto this work, that are tried and refined by their inward and outward experiences in this great quarrell, and the many changes they have paſſed through: In reſpect whereof well qualified perſons are to be found, if due care be but taken in the choice of them. And if herein the people of the Lord ſhall be waiting upon him for his guidance and preſence with them, we may have grounds to hope that God (whoſe name hath all along been called upon in the managing of this Cauſe) will pour out ſo abundantly of his ſpirit upon his people attending on him in righteous wayes, and will alſo ſo move their hearts to chooſe perſons bearing his Image into the Magiſtracy, that a more glorious product may ſpring up out of this then at firſt we can expect, to the ſetting up of the Lord himſelfe as chiefe Judge and Lawgiver amongſt us. And unto this the wiſedome and honeſty of the perſons now in power May have an opportunity eminently to come into diſcovery. For in this caſe, and upon the grounds alrea-

dy layed, the very persons now in power are they unto whose lot it would fall to set about this preparatory work; and by their orders and directions to dispose the whole Body, and bring them into the meeteſt capacity to effect the same. The moſt natural way for which would seem to be by a General Council, or Convention of faithful, honeſt, and diſcerning men, choſen for that purpoſe by the free conſent of the whole Body of adherents to this Cauſe in the ſeveral parts of the Nations, and obſerving the time and place of meeting appointed to them (with other circumſtances concerning their Election) by order from the preſent Ruling Power, but conſidered as General of the Army.

Which Convention is not properly to exerciſe the Legiſlative Power, but only to debate freely, and agree upon the particulars, that by way of fundmental Conſtitutions ſhall be laid and inviolably obſerved, as the conditions upon which the whole body ſo repreſented, doth conſent to caſt it ſelfe into a Civil and Politique Incorporation, and under the viſible forme and adminiſtration of Government therein declared, and to be by each individual member of the Body ſubſcribed in teſtimony of his or their particular conſent given thereunto. Which conditions ſo agreed (and amongſt them an Act of Oblivion for one) will be without danger of being broken or departed from; conſidering of what it is they are the conditions, and the nature of the Convention wherin they are made; which is of the people repreſented in their higheſt ſtate of Soveraignty, as they have the ſword in their hands unſubjected unto the rules of Civil Government, but what themſelves orderly aſſembled for that purpoſe, doe think fit to make. And the ſword upon theſe conditions ſubjecting it ſelf to the Supreme Judicature, thus to be ſet up; how ſuddenly might harmony

harmony, righteousnes, love, peace, and safety unto the whole Body follow hereupon, as the happy fruit of such a settlement, if the Lord have yet any delight to be amongst us?

And this once put in a way, and declared for by the General and Army (as that which they are clearly convinced in the sight of God is their duty to bring about, and which they engage accordingly to see done;) How firmly and freely would this oblige the hearts and persons, the counsels & purses, the affections and prayers, with all that is in the power of this whole party to do, in way of assistance and strenthning the hands of those now in power, whatever straights and difficulties they may meet with in the maintenance of the publique safety and peace?

This then being the state of our present affairs and differences, let it be acknowledged on all hands, and let all be convinced that are concerned, that there is not only a possibility, but a probability, yea a compelling necessity of a firm union in this great Body, the setting of which in joynt and tune againe, by a spirit of meekness and feare of the Lord, is the work of the present day, and will prove the onely remedy, under God, to uphold and carry on this blessed cause and worke of the Lord in the three Nations, that is already come thus far onwards in its progresse to its desired and expected end of bringing in Christ, the Desire of all Nations, as the chiefe Ruler amongst us.

Now unto this re-uniting work let there be a readinesse in all the dissenting parts from the highest to the lowest, by cheerfully coming forth to one another in a spirit of self-denial and love in stead of war and wrath, and to cast down themselves before the Lord, who is the Father of all their spirits, in self-abasement and humiliation, for the mutual offence they have been in

in for some time past, one unto another, and great provocation unto God, and reproach unto his most glorious name, who expected to have been served by them with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.

And, as an inducement unto this, Let us assure our selves, the meanes of effecting it will not prove so difficult as other things that have been brought about in the late war, if the minds and spirits of all concerned were once well and duely prepared hereunto, by a kindly work of self-denial and self-abasement, set home by the spirit of the Lord upon their consciences; which if he please, he may doe we know not how soon. Nay if we shall behold with a discerning eye the inside of that work which God hath been doing amongst us the three years last past, it would seem chiefly to have been his aime, to bring his people into such a frame as this is. For in this tract of time, there hath been (as we may say) a great silence in Heaven, as if God were pleased to stand still and be as a looker on, to see what his people would be in their latter end, and what work they would make of it, if left to their own wisedome and Politick contrivances. And as God hath had the silent part; so men, and that good men too, have had the active and busie part, and have like themselves made a great sound and noise, like the shout of a King in a mighty Hoast; which whilst it hath been a sound onely and no more, hath not done much hurt as yet; but the feare and jealousie thereby caused, hath put the whole Body out of frame, and made them apt to fall into great confusions and disorder.

And if there be thus arisen a general dissent and disagreement of parts (which is not, nor ought to be accounted the lesse considerable, because it lies hid and kept in under a patient silence) why should there

not

not be as general a confeſſion and acknowledgement of what each may find themſelves overtaken in, and cannot but judge themſelves faulty for? This kinde of vent being much better then to have it break out in flames of a forward and untimely wrathful ſpirit, which never works the righteouſneſſe of God. Eſpecially ſince what hath been done amongſt us, may probably have been more the effect of temptation then the product of any malicious deſigne; and this ſort of temptation is very common and incident to men in power (how good ſoever they may be) to be overtaken in; and thereupon doe ſudden and unadviſed actions, which the Lord pardons and over rules for the beſt: evidently making appear that it is the work of the weak and fleſhly part, which his own people carry about with them too much unſubdued. And therefore the Lord thinks fit by this meanes, to ſhew them the need of being beholding to their ſpiritual part, to reſtore them again, and bring them into their right temper and healthful conſtitution.

And thus whilſt each diſſenting part is aggravating upon it ſelfe faultineſſe and blame, and none excuſing, but all confeſſing they deſerve, in one ſort or other, reproof, if not before men, yet to Gods ſight: Who knowes how ſoon it may pleaſe God to come into this broken, contrite, and ſelf denying frame of Spirit in the good people within the three Nations, and own them thus truly humbled and abaſed, for his Temple and the place of his habitation and reſt, wherein he will abide for ever? of whom it may be ſaid God is in the Midſt of her, ſhe ſhall not be moved; God ſhall help her and that right early, or with his morning appearance. At which time he will ſit ſilent no longer, but Heaven will ſpeak again, and become active and powerful in the ſpirits and hearts of Honeſt men, and in the works

of

of his providences, when either they goe out to fight by Sea or by Land, or remaine in counsel and debates at home for the publique Weale, and againe heare the prayers of his people, and visibly own them as a flock of holy men, as *Jerusalem* in her solemn feasts. *I will yet for this be enquired of by the House of Israel, saith the Lord, to doe it for them*: And then they shall know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they are my people, and that ye my flock the flock of my pasture, are men that have shewed your selves weak sinful men, and I am your God that have declared my self an all-wise and powerful God, saith the Lord God.

Postscript

Postſcript.

Reader,

Upon the peruſal of this Diſcourſe thou wilt quickly perceive that theſe two things are principally aimed at in it by the Author. Firſt to anſwer in ſome meaſure that which is called for by thoſe in power, when they publiquely profeſſe they deſire nothing more then conviction, and to find out the hidden provocations which either have or yet may bring forth the Lord againſt theſe Nations, in the way which at preſent they are in.

Secondly, To remove out of the minds and ſpirits of the honeſt Partie, that ſtill agree in the reaſon and juſtice of the good Old Cauſe, all things of a private Nature and ſelfiſh Concern (the tendency whereof ſerves but to foment and ſtrengthen wrath and diviſions amongſt them) and in Place thereof to ſet before them that common and publique intereſt, which (if with ſinceritie embraced) may be the meanes of not only procuring a firm union amongſt them, but alſo of conſerving them herein.

In order to this, the Author hath not been wil-

ling much to declare his own Opinion, or deliver any Positive Conclusions, as to discusse the business by way of question and answer, and thereby make as neer a conjecture as he can, of that, wherein the several dissenting parts may with better satisfaction meet together, and agree upon a safe and righteous bottome, then to remaine at the distance they doe, to the apparent advantage of the Common Enemie, the approaching ruine of themselves, and needlesse hazzard (if not losse) of the Cause they have been so deeply engaged in. Especially considering that when once they shall be found beginning to come forth to one another, in such a condiscending self-denying spirit, cleansed from the stain of hypocrisie and deceit, they may be well assured that light will spring up amongst them more and more unto a perfect day; and then those things which at present we have next in view, will prove as shadowes ready to flee away before the morning brightnesse of Christs Heavenly Appearance and second comming; through which they will be heightened and improved to their full maturitie, to the bringing in that Kingdome of his that shall never be moved.

And because an Essay hath been already made, in a private way to obtain the first thing, that is to say, Conviction; which chiefly is in the hand of the Lord to give; the same obligation lies upon the Author, with respect to the second,

for

for the exposing of it as now it is unto Publicke view, and therein leaving it also with the Lord, for his blessing thereunto.

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